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THE WEEK 667
MEXICAN HOLIDAY *John Hay* 670
COMMUNICATIONS 673
Why Silence—Catholic Doctors and Teachers —The Tragedy of the Masaryks
THE STAGE *Kappo Phelan* 674
THE SCREEN *Philip T. Hartung* 675
THE LABOR MOVEMENT *John C. Cort* 676
NOTES ON TOURISM *Ernestine Evans* 677
BOOKS AND TRAVEL *Ernestine Evans* 680
TWO NOVELS 682
The Ides of March—Bodies and Souls

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An Alternative

THE MOMENTARY sense of relief and gratitude at the Communist losses in the Italian elections should not be allowed to distort the situation. The problem is still there. Not only unemployment, poverty, vast inequalities of wealth and diet, and the demoralization resulting from a quarter century of fascism and war —an aggregate of unresolved resentments. But there is also undaunted a Communist-Socialist machine which was able in the face of America's and the Vatican's all out political defensive to pile up literally millions of Italians votes. The Communist threat is very much alive in Italy.

That also goes for Western Europe, generally, despite Congressional approval, and the first actual beginnings, of the European Recovery Program. There is no current indication that the Kremlin intends to curb in the least its highly successful expansion program. On the contrary straws in Berlin and Vienna are blowing in an increasingly aggressive direction. Can any well-posted American seriously believe that the USSR will be effectively restrained simply by our economic assistance plus a few vague political gestures encouraging firmness on the part of the new bloc in Western Europe? As Russia consolidates her latest conquests in Danubia, her adversaries in the West continue to lose ground.

The Russian dictatorship is set to stride on relentlessly. One choice would be not to oppose its march in hopes that it would collapse of indigestion, under its own weight, or that it might cave in eventually to a passive resistance that would be worldwide. This is a terrible choice involving the sacrifice of perhaps a generation of one's fellow-men.

The other similarly grim choice is to have a showdown. In our present lethargic course that might be five years off or ten, but hardly the less inevitable. Far better have it out now when the United States is militarily, atomically and industrially the more powerful. But if this showdown is to take the form of a preventive war with atomic weapons how many Americans would opt for that? Only one arena then remains—the UN.

Hence the importance of the resolution introduced by Homer Ferguson and fifteen of his colleagues in the Senate, April 12, to amend the UN in four vital aspects: reorganization of the Security Council and abrogation of the veto power where aggression or arming for aggression is involved; setting up by the Council of the effective atomic controls already proposed by the United States and of armament quotas; creation of an international police force equipped by the UN and made up of volunteers from the smaller nations, with national reserves of the big powers held in readiness; a new world court with jurisdiction over both governments and individuals in matters of aggression. If Russia vetoes these amendments, a new international organization embodying them would be set up. The fact that a plan which is detailed and specific inevitably raises a myriad of objections should not cloud the issue. America must make up her mind on what to do about Russia in the short period remaining in which we can still have the upper hand. As an alternative to capitulation or atomic war the Ferguson proposal will be discussed at greater length in subsequent issues of this magazine.

Wall Street Isolation

INSTEAD of fighting the United Financial Employes' Union, Wall Street leaders should have offered extra and handsome fees for the educational opportunities the union is presenting to the financial fraternity and its friends and followers. The approach to American economy via Downtown New York is still very important; it remains the most important financial, ownership and over-all organizational and administrative approach to business enterprise. The responsibility of the New York headquarters is tremendous and the function of the New York staff

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enormously important—and their opportunity dazzling.

In any army, the headquarters staff ought to know what things are like in the operating line outfits, and the same thing holds for business. There is much about how are things in the mines, mills, factories, on the highways and railroads and oceans, in the stores and warehouses and fields and packing plants which is not reflected very clearly in the life lived in the headquarters zone of Manhattan. One of the big things not well reflected is the "labor problem" and "unionism." Having a strong union "downtown" would be worth many millions of dollars to the national economy for what it would teach the rear echelons about front line operations.

The regular people of Wall Street have seemed extraordinarily hostile to this new and struggling union local, and the hostility does not seem reasonable. It is true that ever since 1929 the business down there has been in an important sense downward; it is over-expanded for the work it has to do. Shouldn't that be faced as a problem in technological development and obsolescence? It is unprogressive to feel all defeatist and defensive about that, and react in such a spirit. Organizations and energies and personnel should gradually but positively be shifted to other places and other work.

The Exchanges themselves, by their function, represent as near a free market as can exist in the country, and they epitomize laissez-faire as it can live in one section of today's world. But that should not fool the people who work there. The real world is not like that outside, and if one pretends it is, one brings troubles and frustrations down on the head. It is destructive archaism to view the whole economy from the angle of a free auctioneer.

And what is the sense of respectability which Wall Street traditionally and notoriously wraps about itself? It doubtless has some manly and independent virtues mixed up in its genesis, but it appears unsympathetic, unrealistic and not a little absurd nowadays, when it pretends to act as though business enterprises were an affair of established, responsible, family sized firms, with a private care for its dependents and an open field for new talent and "character."

The striking employees are suffering the personal injustices of underpayment and bad working conditions. Their unorganized and unprotected and "accidental" status indicates there is a social and institutional failure. The UFE Union is a legitimate union. And the leaders of Wall Street have been underprivileged. Wilfully or not, they have been isolated from the currents and waves which have been forming the enterprises under their financial and administrative oversight. Wall Street can, in the settlement of this strike, overcome its dangerous and frustrating isolation from the post-Depression, post-War world, from the dominant social and political and economic forces influencing the country, and from the human difficulties of those who work in the economic system without enough creative expression, or money, or security, or fellowship.

Gadget-Glory

THE 1948 National Home Show at Grand Central Palace is essentially practical, not to say functional. It is a disappointment that there is only one house on view, somewhat mis-named a dream house, for surely no dream was ever so utterly undiaphanous, so truly concrete? Not, perhaps literally, for it is built of what approximates, in look and texture, admirably well-matched bamboo-leaves, beautifully uniform in color and size: these are, of course, some of the newest type building blocks, ceilinged by the last word in roofing shingles, doored by aluminum burnished to silver. That only one decorator has been turned loose is also perhaps a pity; each room might have embodied individual ideas, instead of the whole being in slightly etiolated good taste.

It is evident that the utilities have now majored in art, and are graduates, indeed, many now hold their Master's; while the arts, as exemplified in living and dining and sleeping rooms, in china and pottery, in glass and silver ware, are curiously unsure of themselves, lacking in poise and temperament. The one bookcase does not appear to contain any book written or published more than two years ago; the pictures and sculptures seem to have been carved, painted or designed by two-year olds, or are conceived in clever imitation of their style.

But the gadgets are gorgeously glamorous. The washing machines, forever and forever frothing, the dryers tirelessly tossing brightly colored garments into magically warm air, the wettest of rain splashing on both sides of a thermoseal instantly adjustable window; the precision-built sink cabinets for the kitchen, complete with top, sink faucets, strainer, metal bread drawer and hardwood cutting board! And the Maytags, infinitely more revolutionary than anything Vladimir Illyitch foresaw on his May Days, since they release woman from the chains of sink and suds, and free her from the tyranny of three of the four immemorial C's, from children, cooking and clothes! The Dutch oven broils for you while you take junior to that matinee; the ABC ironers can be pleasurably worked even by congenital idiots who cannot press a hankie; and mysterious washing-up machines also rinse while their blessed owner sips coffee. The radio-controlled garage-door is an admirable feature; the storm windows, obedient to human will and whim, and oblivious

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of weather, are each one better than the next; the midget Mortemp heater, 14 x 32 inches, so small it can fit in the base of an ordinary chimney, vies with air-conditioning units and an infinity of ice-boxes for immediate attention. The useful is not only become agreeable, but beautiful. Yet ungratefully grumbling somewhere deep within the gadget-intoxicated woman, there must grow a faint query: this costly leisure won at the price of so much good work, and better advertising, is it to be used only to skim that mystery or patronise that movie? Will not the creative force, reduced to a six-room model home, with nary a bun to bake or a shirt to bleach, degenerate into boredom for idle heart and hand?

Emmanuel Chapman

FEW Americans have been as active in the battle against religious and racial hatred as Professor Emmanuel Chapman of Hunter College, who died, April 17, at the age of 43. It can be said without hesitation that the vehemence with which this convert threw himself into the struggle, the way in which he spent himself, directly caused his untimely death—even as it frustrated his marked potentialities for renown as a philosopher. As founder and director of the Committee of Catholics to Fight Anti-Semitism (1939) and its successor, the Committee of Catholics for Human Rights, Dr. Chapman conducted the activities of the organization virtually single-handed. His was a policy of presence. In his eagerness to join battle with evil his pronouncements at times reflected rash practical judgments; for the same reason his committee was sometimes used by other pressure groups of less disinterested intent. Yet his organization did rush into the breach against the Christian Front and other forces of intolerance at many a critical juncture. Its determined adherence to Christian personalist principles is now a matter of public knowledge; Dr. Chapman's is a testimony which will long endure. May he rest in peace.

This Travel Issue

WHEN your job is to put a magazine together, counting the lines per column, wondering how to spell a word, indicating type size and the initial letter at the start of a piece, you do not read, for sense, the pieces you are dummying up. And so I do not know what advice Ernestine Evans has given about traveling in 1948, nor what John Hay brought back from his travel in Mexico. I only know that I do not want to know.

The ships still sail down the bay and there must still be the moment when you stand on deck and suddenly it is no longer like being on a ferry boat because the ship moves now with the sea. There must still be the first sight of the white cliffs, the green fields of Ireland, the gray African mountains, the first foreign port, with the customs guards, the longshoremen, the curious soldiers, the policemen, standing on the stone quay looking up at the ship, the first conveyances, the cart, the automobile, the first alien voices. There must still be the first night in the first city, with the object within the table at the side of the bed, the shutters carefully adjusted at the windows, and you open the shutters and there are the roofs and the chimney pots, the dome of a church, and it is like when Louise looks out over Paris but it is not because you have heard the opera, it is not because of the books, it is because of something in yourself that you stand at the window expectant and also certain.

There must still be the young who this summer will make their first trip abroad and for whom nothing will ever be like it again—not the first job, not the first love, not the first sorrow.

But for the adult it's over—for the soldier of the first war, for the soldier of the second, and for anyone who traveled between the wars, the Grand Tour has been made.

An American is an American now. The American athlete carries his beefsteak with him wherever he goes, to run, to jump, to fight. The American carries with him his new knowledge that he is no longer returning to an atavistic home. Because for years it was that. It was not the museums; it was the way they made stone walls, in Europe, or hedges, and roads everywhere, the way they had made the villages with the fields round them, the way they had submitted nature to their will through the love and parsimonious care they gave to nature in order to make it look the way they wanted it to look.

It was as if the American traveling abroad had had enough of red Indians for a while, enough of Kansas that is as big as a nation, enough of the endless plains, enough of the mountains for a while, enough of colonizing and adventuring, and wanted to see what countryside, cities, villages are like when you have had time to make them into what you want—what Europe had been made to look like by his ancestors.

That is the way it is when the younger generation goes out into the world; it comes home, once in a while, if it can; no matter how far it has gone it would like to come home once in a while just to see what it is that it remembers, half remembers. Then the time comes when it returns home no more. When the home is destroyed, for instance, or when the old people quarrel or ask too many questions. Americans now have to make what they can where they are.

C. G. PAULDING.

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Mexican Holiday

JOHN HAY

ON THE bridge outside the customs shed where they were lazily ushering us into Mexico, a pale little Mexican boy offered to sell Kristi a brown, beaten gardenia. She turned away, and he said: "I give it to you," with a kind of sad courtesy, and then retreated. As we were getting into the car he came back and said: "Will you give me something too?" We are not used to such gentle propriety in business.

* * *

We drive through a moon land, a high plateau almost level with the mountain tops, the white gravel ground covered only by clumps of pale cactus. Even so, and in the late afternoon, the violent, glaring sun is more with us than it ever was in the north. It seems the crown and substance of this world, shouting for worship. One imagines that farther on, with men and streets and trees, all things breathe in its thick gold air and move only by its leave, until it falls in storms of cloud and fire behind the jagged ridges of the mountains.

* * *

The wild, dry strangeness of the mountains suddenly thrusts you out. Surely nothing could live in this land except that which is as old as it is.

* * *

A yellow truck carrying a load of pop bottles slipped off the road into the ditch. The driver, perhaps waiting for help, perhaps just waiting, sits at the edge of a great heap of broken glass slowly picking out the unbroken bottles.

* * *

The little Indian children by the road are charming. They are as gay as butterflies; they screech like the birds. I caught a glimpse of some very small boys, dressed in faded blue, trying to play baseball with a thick stave. One of them tried it out, banging the dust with it to left and right, and the others watched him with great mischief and amusement. It was all joy, and no competition.

* * *

Then there were two boys, little miniature Mexicans with sombreros and white cotton clothes, who were riding two donkeys, each with a load of straw. One of the loads got unbalanced and the little ones were completely unable to right it. They jumped around the donkeys laughing, quite caught up in the fun of failure.

* * *

The high, plain walls of the church were tinted with a faded lavender. The sun poured in through the wide doors. Black haired children were sitting in the front pews singing. As the sound of their voices swelled, then hummed against the walls and died out in the vault, you could hear the loud twittering of birds coming in the open windows.

* * *

The little town of Tamazunchale is wedged between the hills and clings to the edge of a shallow, milky river. All day long and into the night a file of white clad Indians comes down from the mountains, to sell and trade. Some of them carry only little sacks of corn, others have walked forty miles with bales of animal hides on their backs. They are thin and small but very strong. Their poverty is pure, it belongs to no one but the sky and the hills. Theirs is a vestigial society, neither Indian nor modern Mexican. But by their simple economy they keep their identity—that day-long file of men, women and children with bare brown feet trudging and trotting between the town and their steep fields of maize.

* * *

A dirty market in an empty square. A huge iron pot of bubbling grease; flies settling and crawling on shanks of meat that still have cuffs of fur on them. Old women with dusty rebozos around their shoulders sit on the ground cutting up pieces of cactus, arranging green and red peppers in neat piles. Poking through the smell, the flies, the hot sun, come two other American tourists. We studiously look away from each other as if to say: "We are not just tourists. We came here on a mission of culture. We thought we might pick up something of interest." And so slink out of the two ends of the square.

* * *

We were told that Mexico City would be like Paris before the war. But Paris was all of a piece. It received you and spoke to you out of its long inheritance. Mexico City is only as permanent as the violence of this land will allow. Physically, it is incongruous. It evolves like the pyramids, one layer succeeding another.

It has its Champs Elysées, its deep parks, its fashionable stores; but on the not very far edge of the city, beyond a new crowd of suburban stucco houses, there is a 14-mile lava flow, as forsaken as a black stretch of the sea.

Buildings sink down into the city's swampy foundations, once a lake in Aztec times. Cracks

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widen in the heavy gray cathedral, built on the site of the main Aztec temple in Tenochtitlan.

Now, at the end of the dry season, dust blows through the streets from the Valley of Mexico. Dust and wind, the high sharp sun, and the thin air, give you a strangely insubstantial feeling.

There does not seem to be any natural progression to things. You cannot apply organic solutions. It is impossible to understand either men or their surroundings here unless you can abstract yourself into some relation with space. Life is a violence of emptiness. It is something I cannot grasp in a few days, and I doubt that I have the strength to stay here and apply my own solution.

* * *

Some of the Spaniards in the city now think of themselves as Mexicans, but they will have no part of the Indians, who were here many thousands of years before them. We asked one influential citizen whether Mexico did not still belong to the Indians by virtue of heritage and numbers.

"Well," he said with some pride, "I do not claim to have any Indian blood myself."

"They are Mongolians, very strange, very lazy."

We asked him about their feats of physical labor—the corn fields on the mountain slopes—the great loads they carry on their backs.

"But that only shows how primitive they are."

"We should have done what you did," he said. "You threw them out, but of course there were too many for us."

That Indian permanence, giving them an abstractness which cannot be fathomed, irritated him vastly, as it does many Americans who live here.

* * *

In contrast to the primitive, Mexico has been trying to industrialize, and, little by little, Indians have been pulled in to work in the cities. Through industrial expansion, successful or not, the country is committed to some extent to the upheavals of the world economy, more particularly to the United States.

But industrial society is so completely impotent compared to the great violence and indifference of this land; and the people have no respect for machines. They have other gods.

The Indians may survive us all. They are used to fatality; they live with it. We on the other hand are drawn into fatality, in spite of all our great attempts to fight it and our declared intentions to avoid it.

* * *

Many of the Indian servants of American residents here refuse to wash the dishes in hot water. They insist it would give them rheumatism. Nor will they give in to any of the fancy innovations of our modern kitchen. No soap flakes, no steel wool or scouring powders for them. They go on using their zacate, a little fibre pad made out of cactus, with which to scrub the dishes, and tied up bunches of sticks with which to scrape them.

* * *

An Indian gardener wheeled his barrow into the hotel patio dining room. The waiter, protecting his sacred guests, told him not to go through tables, but out in the middle by the fountain.

"Porque?" asked the gardener.

The waiter gave him an indignant explanation. He nodded, picked up his wheelbarrow, and continued on through the tables.

* * *

An American, brought up with a maiden nervousness about a snake as a covert, slimy creature which it is better to kill blindly than to see, could have no conception of the power they symbolized among the ancient Middle-Americans. But there they are, the thick stone figures, black and ugly as rubber truncheons; heavy and slow, part of the earth, made out of strength and fertility.

* * *

You come to the ruins of Teotihuacan through a pall of dust. The dry season has reached the limit of its violence.

In this high barren valley, with its mustard yellow fields and dry mountains dotted sparsely with green, the sun's rays are as sharp as knives; and this sacred city was planned according to the sun's exactitude. I read that each building was placed so that the sun's rays would "strike a particular portion on a certain day in a given season."

Temples and plazas use the pattern of the valley and its mountain borders, and on top of the great pyramid of the sun, built in the shape of a volcano, you are up with all the violence of the natural world. Its top is an apex of worship, an attempt to join the rich and vengeful gods of nature, to be closer to the sun's mastery, the overwhelming rain, the closeness and infinity of the night.

But the conception has so accurate a form that it is a little terrifying. I struggle up the sides of the pyramid defending myself. My body asserts itself. I will not fall off these dizzy heights and be a sacrifice to this idea of power. I am alive, even in the twentieth century, and refuse to become a mere subject of history. (I hate to think how a Toltec Indian would feel at the top of the Empire State Building!)

* * *

A dance hall in Mexico City. They frisk you as you go in the door. A big crowd of young men and girls, with the men most in evidence, the girls seeming older and more drab. But how some of these couples jitterbug! Not like long, loose-limbed American kids, but with vibrant, kinetic energy, quick and fast—dark short Mexicans yanking the vitals out of the dance.

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There is a Spanish dance, though played with horn and saxophone, in which they become most ceremonious. They understand and wait for its halts and balances.

They dance with no expression in their eyes, but they have the body's knowledge of the dance, as though it were an old, old ritual. Their motions have a deep and savage tension which pulls you toward them.

Jazz bands, bouncers, whores, toughs notwithstanding, it is a high, ceremonial hall where only the dancers know its secrets.

* * *

A hotel in Cuernavaca, on the tourist route, with a cast of characters straight out of the slicks. There is a German refugee, so tall and thin that he sways a little as he walks. He has a black hearing instrument in his ear. His face is huge and raw-boned, with a scar across one cheek, and his eyes are pale marble, as lifeless as those of a fish.

He has a "blonde baby" with him, tanned, dressed in a Mexican frock, with a face from a Berlin *Illustrierte*.

He screws up his face for the benefit of a small child, the mouth edging up toward the scar in a savage sneer, the high, tight forehead wrinkling. The child, though not amused, can take it, much to my surprise.

Then there is the classic type of rich Mexican —fat, olive jowls, an owl's beak, thick horned rimmed glasses. With him is a Toulouse-Lautrec woman with black shadowed eyes and a spiraled mass of dyed-red hair.

There is also an American mystery tourist whom I seem to remember lurking in some murder movie. He wears the accepted tourist outfit: a short-sleeved sport shirt covered with palm trees, blue trousers and brown and white saddle shoes; but above this is a large head with thick, wavy hair, a pair of amber-colored dark glasses and a very tight hard mouth.

* * *

But there is also "Mom" and her impatient husband. What an exhausting occupation, being a tourist! to move all day long flat-footed on the hard streets, with a board of weariness across your eyes, checking off one sight after another from your list, falling into bed with a 7 a.m. deadline, ready to move on again under the advice of the gods of charm and sentimentality.

"George, I'm just too tired to go on."

"Don't let him cheat you. That's not real alligator."

"All right, you can have a martini; but I don't advise it. Now with rum at least you know what you're buying."

They put up a brave front. They visit the cathedrals and the murals, push their way through the markets, and admire the flowers; but they carry with them a constant defensiveness. They are afraid of being lied to, stolen from, traduced and tricked. It is almost, in Mexico, as if they were afraid of losing their identity.

In the churches there are figures of the bleeding Christ, on which the people hang tiny silver images of their limbs, their hearts, lungs, or livers, in thanks that their prayers are answered and their ills are cured. Surely there ought to be a place where a tourist could hang his guide book as a thanks-offering if there ever came an hour when he escaped from the martyrdom of travel.

* * *

There is something maddening and grating about the ever present green-uniformed soldier in Mexico. One is sick of soldiers in any case, but there seems to be even less need of them here. The uniform shows up a latent Mexican cruelty and disrespect for life.

The damned insolence of this sergeant, for example, pushing his way through the square where a crowd of Indians is milling around some market stalls. The slick, feminine way he has of holding his cigarette and puffing out thin wisps of smoke. A large pearl-handled revolver hangs at his hip. The tough brown face is smirking and arrogant, seeming to say: "Your little lives are not worth my trouble."

* * *

It is hard to understand how the human organism could gain a foothold, let alone a home, in some parts of Mexico. As you drive through the mountains, ribbed, dry, thrown together in all directions, and thread your way through the narrow valleys, you feel like a naked worm dug out of its home soil and dropped here, to dry out and disappear.

* * *

Lying in bed at night, I listen to all those separate sounds which were diffused during the day by the omniscient sun. With a sudden rush, the yapping of a troop of dogs; then, in the stillness, the crowing of pre-dawn roosters, a shot, a peal of church bells breaking cleanly on the night air, the thick voice of a drunkard croaking a few words of a song.

* * *

In Puebla, a Catholic city, of many churches, we are much reminded of a city in Europe. It has a similar respectability. The central square, lined with arcades, has more trees than is usual; the deep, shuttered houses have the grilled iron balconies of a city in Spain.

But in another and more terrible way we are reminded of Europe. The papers are full of war talk: the same old threats and counter-threats, the meeting of cabinets, the mouthing of generals and senators. The Mexican press appears to enjoy it, splashing on headlines like "The World One Step Closer to the Gulf." The whole

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dreary oppressive weight of it moves down again upon our heads. I suppose we will go home again and look for some hope and justification in events, but now it only seems a case of the great inflexible world posing you the alternative of annihilation and anarchy against a decent existence.

* * *

Imagine our relief, as the Victorians say, upon reading these banner headlines in the Mexico City *Herald*, all for the sake of a slap-happy column by Cornelius Vanderbilt:

"NOTHING TO FEAR
Vanderbilt Says There Won't Be War, As Nobody Wants to Fight.
Don't Worry, Enjoy World, He Advises."

* * *

The Indian mother picked up her baby from the dusty ground where it sat stiff and upright like a little doll, with its matted black hair, round brown face and Mongolian eyes. She puts it on her back and tightens her dark rebozo around it with a slow and natural gesture of love and protection.

* * *

Many Mexicans behave with a natural courtesy and some of them with the most natural insolence and indecency.

* * *

The drivers, in town or on the road, are crazy. They hurl their cars around, banging at their horns, as though they were playing a kind of foolish game in which the chance of death or injury is only to be smirked at. They risk their necks out of pique, because, let us say, someone has passed them on the road.

* * *

A desert landscape like a disease—a mottled grey floor between treeless mountains. The only living things are the paddle shaped cactus plants and a vulgar company of vultures bobbing at the road's edge, pecking at bits of fur and flesh.

* * *

How unexpectedly good it is to be in San Luis Potosi! The city's lights are out. We smell the candle smoke at the mouth of the church and hear a priest talking in commanding and peremptory tones back of the thick square pillars inside. An old woman comes down the dark street with a basket of the whitest flowers on her head. The show is still on at the Cine. A generator is roaring and grinding away inside, making the front ticket booth shake like a Punch and Judy box. The air is cool in the square, and up through the trees is a patch of starlit sky like a spring of clear water.

Communications

WHY SILENCE

TO the Editors: A letter to you usually is an answer or a question pertaining to what has been written in THE COMMONWEAL. But this is an inquiry about what has not been written and why the silence. Perhaps I have been the only one among you to encounter this particular situation during the past month. From the pulpit of the church where I go, not only insults to communists have come down steadily, but we have been urged to write our friends and relatives in Italy and France (?) and to make it plain to them that we would not help them if they vote communist. In the pews, and at the entrance, vicious little pamphlets are distributed.

I think this state of affairs calls for a question to be printed in THE COMMONWEAL, if it still deserves its name. And that is: "Did the pulpits of the American Catholic Churches urge their parishioners to write their German friends and relatives not to vote for Hitler?" It is uselss to ask if they did it for Franco. But, at least did they do it for Hitler? If not, their excuse will be "We did not know then." Why do so many of us Catholics never seem "to know" when it is a matter of fascism or nazism which should be as loathsome to us as communism? It is no longer unfortunate only, it is tragic that we always seem to have two weights and two measures and that it invariably ends for so many of us in what looks like a collusion with money power.

If it is not really so, then there is no excuse for the shameful practices which I mentioned. If a message had to be sent to our friends in Italy it could have been the words of Nicolas Berdiaeff: "Communism . . . the evidence of the unfulfilled tasks of Christianity." That might have helped them, and us, toward that "awakening of consciousness" of which spoke Pope Pius XII, and which is the only hope.

CLAIRE HUCHET BISHOP.

CATHOLIC DOCTORS AND TEACHERS

Detroit, Mich.

TO the Editors: Mr. Dolan in his letter in your March 26th issue makes an important point regarding Catholicism and Catholic medical men. However, some of his tangential remarks sounded as significant a note as did his main thesis.

Mr. Dolan's letter stated that after 16 years of Catholic education he was unable, using the armamentarium provided him by his Catholic teachers, to cope with the materialism of his associates in a secular environment. And then, as a remedial suggestion, he calls for an extension of his parochial tutelage. Just how long would he stay in the incubator? At some point he must encounter the conflicting forces of the world outside the nursery. Unless Mr. Dolan as a doctor interns in a Catholic hospital and restricts his practice to the clergy. For, as mentioned elsewhere in the same issue of THE COMMONWEAL, the American community "is one made up of people of all kinds of world outlook." It is hard to believe that

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if 16 years of conditioning fail to do the job, 20 will succeed. (And what of those whose 16th or 12th educational year marks the finale of their formal learning?)

Are the facts too hard to recognize? Is Catholic higher education failing in its responsibility of preparing Catholic laymen to defend their faith in a materialistic world?

Catholic universities seem to base their practical approach to education on some rather shaky foundations.

1. That celibacy is the *sine qua non* of intellectual competence. And, as the majority of students intend to procreate their kind, the tempo of education is geared to the mediocre.

   In this light is it strange that Catholic lay leaders in the creative endeavors are and have been severely few? And that among them a disproportionate number are converts?
2. That no man has said anything stimulating (be it right or wrong) since the thirteenth century. And this is applied not only to heretics but to the leaders of the Church.

   It is not hard to understand, then, why the work of a secular teacher at Columbia is used by a Catholic source to refute the archaic babblings of a Catholic university professor (which were published in a secular picture magazine). And why being anti-Franco is apparently a greater crime than being anti-papal.
3. That it is a military blunder to know the plan of attack of the enemy. And the utmost folly of military strategy to allow subordinates to read the available blueprints of the enemy's weapons.

   Therefore, it is not difficult to see why a Catholic graduate, when struck by a missile straight from the ammunition box of Karl Marx or John Dewey, cannot defend his position to his own satisfaction or to the edification of the onlooker.

THOMAS GEOGHEGAN.

THE TRAGEDY OF THE MASARYKS

Tenafly, N. J.

TO the Editors: The great actuality of the positive ideas contained in my essay, "The Tragedy of the Masaryks," in THE COMMONWEAL of April 23, could hardly have been better underlined than by Winston Churchill's remorseful survey about "the follies of the victors." He calls the complete break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire the second cardinal tragedy of the post-war settlement. The age seems to have ripened into fruitful reminiscences. Also Don Luigi Sturzo (*People and Freedom*, April, 1948) revives discussions with Benes at Geneva in 1922, in which an Italian scheme of Danubian cooperation was rejected by the Czech leader as leading automatically to the resurrection of Austria and Vienna.

Already David F. Strong in "Austria 1918/19" (New York, 1939) quoted Benes from American sources as preferring the Anschluss to any Danubian reconstruction, on purely Czech national grounds. Yet Professor Frederick Hertz in his recent book "The Economic Problem of the Danubian States" (London, 1947) correctly remembers a prewar publication by Benes (1908), where the federalization of Austria is advocated and her dismemberment deemed impractical and unreal. Professor Hertz himself, an old friend of Eisenmann, representing the Austrian voice in Western liberalism, today embodies best all the experiences which led the liberal intellectuals from the war cry of their youth that "Austriam esse delendam" to the full understanding of Danubian reconstruction. . . .

May I correct here two printing errors in my essay as well? On p. 648, line 4, the correct wording is the following: "to whom, as he said, both Slovakia and Croatia would be lost." On p. 649, line 13, the wording should be: "Not even the return of the Sudeten German is *im*possible in a world situation as ours."

ERNST KARL WINTER.

The Stage & Screen

Lazarus Laughed

FORDHAM UNIVERSITY'S presentation of the most difficult of early O'Neill is reason for gratitude in more ways than one. In the first place, only California (at the Pasadena Playhouse) has had a chance to view the play, and while I don't think many of its readers would precisely *run* to see it staged, I'm sure some of them would willingly take an el or a subway for the privilege. In the second place, there is no question that Albert McCleery and his technicians and actors have done a neat job. As I broadcast (WFUV) last Wednesday, I was most of all struck with Mr. McCleery's handling of the difficult element of laughter in the piece. Stage laughter is, of course, a technical problem and a big one. When an actor has to laugh—really laugh—even momentarily, a good deal of preparation has to be made. However, when he has to laugh repeatedly and cumulatively through four long acts and eight scenes, and moreover since some sixty of his cohorts have to indulge in the same process, the business becomes unbearable and the only sensible preparation will be for the audience's taking off at the earliest possible moment. Mr. McCleery evaded this dire conclusion by substituting a musical note for the specified laughter, thereby saving embarrassment all round. He has also handled a cast of sixty—five choruses, principals, dances, etc.—with decision. William Riva's unpretentious unit set and projections seemed to me inherent; and with some reservations, I thought Florence Lamont's masks and costumes fine. Some of the players unquestionably deserve special mention, although indeed not more than the well-trained, disciplined choruses. But Will Walsh's Tiberius, Eugene Diserio's Caligula, Jean Sullivan's Miriam and John Shea's Marcellus were outstanding, and should form a nucleus of talent for smaller, less pretentious concerns in this college theatre. For the play itself, I can only (disrespectfully) call it the biggest lemon of all in the opera of America's greatest dramatist. It projects neither history, nor philosophy, nor any kind of entertainment or emotional experience. I think it should be forgotten—as of now.

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All The King's Men

RUMOR will have penetrated even the corners of the Broadway scene to announce that this version of the Robert Penn Warren Pulitzer Prize novel—accomplished by the author and Erwin Piscator—is exciting, important, American theatre. Unfortunately, it seems to be firmly enmeshed in the rest of Mr. Piscator's "March of Drama Repertory"—a subscription scheme which means that you must buy (I will say, at a bargain) a good deal of indifferent work together with some of the best. As readers of this column know, I am the last one to complain about the subscription idea, but in this particular instance, I think it is truly alarming that a larger public cannot have a chance at this play. As the piece is an adaptation, and as I have not yet read its novel, I want (if the author, director and press people can have so much patience) to do a real examination of it, just as soon as space and time permit. In the meantime, Mr. Piscator and his present excellent actors and workers are to realize that they have this column's serious gratitude. (*At the President Theatre.*)

Ballet Theatre

THE company's present tenure at the Metropolitan Opera House seems fitting and gracious, especially when the "white" ballets are danced as excellently as they are. I wish I had less of prejudice and more of knowledge to deal with their first premiere so far—Anthony Tudor's "Shadow Of The Wind" to Mahler's "Song Of The Earth." But as I am incapable of listening to Mahler with intelligence in any case, and as the prospect of listening to wrestled German sung from the pit to match a formal Chinese spectacle spread on the stage fills me with despair, I'm afraid my remarks would have small critical worth. I think the company's "Sylphides," handled by Youskevitch and Alonso, Barbara Fallis and Norma Vance is a white delight; Robbins's "Interplay" again young and gay; and the Balanchine "Theme and Variations" intellectually interesting. With Agnes DeMille's coming new "Fall River Legend," I should say the organization is providing one of the best of these April evenings. (*at the Metropolitan Opera House.*)

KAPPO PHELAN.

Wild Thyme

NEXT TO AN exciting mystery or horror film there's nothing so relaxing as a good comedy. But what makes one man laugh makes the next guy scowl. I have listed below a few notes on recent pictures that may tickle your funny bone. "Blandings" is the only one that had me rolling in the aisles (what a silly figure of speech!), however the others may roll you. Every man to his own aisle!

No doubt the secret of *"Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House"* is that you see yourself, as this city dweller and his family endure the confinements of a small New York apartment, dream of a home in the country, buy one, get fleeced right and left as they rebuild, but finally survive everything and live to enjoy the place in spite of all the plotting of man and nature against them. Director H. C. Potter knows people and has given us a series of funny episodes that range from documentary-like shots of New York and its crowded millions to bucolic scenes of the hinterlands complete with the vicissitudes of the open spaces and commuter trains. Of course Eric Hodgins's original story deserves much of the credit for the fun; Scriptwriters Norman Panama and Melvin Frank have broadened the themes, but they have retained the warm humor and clever satire of the Hodgins book. The cast is excellent: Cary Grant giving one of his best portrayals as the frustrated advertising man, Myrna Loy looking and acting like the ideal wife, Melvin Douglas responding as this couple's best friend and lawyer, and a large group of supporting players, not forgetting the real estate agent who knows a sucker when he sees one and he sees one. The Grant-Loy-Douglas triangle is a little forced, and the film is rather long for its single home-building theme. But the laughs continue to the end; and while you may agree with Grant that anyone who builds these days is crazy, you are more likely to agree with Douglas that the result is worth it.

If you are a Donald O'Connor fan, as I am, you may enjoy *"Are You With It?"* If you're not, you better approach this unpretentious musical comedy with caution. For most of its fun depends on Donald who portrays a mathematical whiz kid who misplaced a decimal point while figuring out rates at his insurance company and soon finds himself using his math in a carnival. This plot may remind you of the kind of thing you used to see while you were still on the campus, however Donald is much more gifted than most juvenile leads. He is well supported by Lew Parker as a pitchman who thinks up all kinds of uses for Donald's genius; but the rest of the cast are not too enthusiastic about the script's requirements. Some of the songs are fun, some hope to make up for their lack of humor and melody by being risqué. When Donald isn't around, you may not be with "Are You With It?"

"April Showers," in which Jack Carson and Ann Sothern interpret a 1912 vaudeville team, could have been much funnier than it is. It wins some laughs, but it has a plot that takes itself too seriously as Carson learns the hard way that success isn't for everybody. He goes to pieces and takes to drink when his 12-year-old son (Robert Ellis) becomes the hit of the act. The solution to his problem has practically nothing to do with reality.

In *"The Bride Goes Wild,"* Van Johnson, portraying an author of juvenile fiction, also drinks and needs a guiding hand. No doubt some writers need liquor and what other help they can get, but Van doesn't prove the point. June Allyson is much more convincing as his illustrator, a naive country girl who finally tames this writing playboy. The use of an orphan (Butch Jenkins) in the stunt to win June's sympathy isn't likely to endear this film to you. I'm sure no foundling home would consider lending one of their boys to such irresponsible folk, especially a youngster who behaves like a juvenile delinquent. Before this movie runs its slapstick course, you may go as wild as the bride.

The best thing about *"Casbah"* is its songs by Leo Robin and Harold Arlen. Four of these have been

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sweeping the radio networks and are probably in the top seller class already. But little good can be said about the rest of the movie. Whoever thought of making a musical out of "Algiers," or its previous French picture "Pepe Le Moko," had a bright idea. But the slip between the idea and the finished movie was great. "Casbah" wasn't meant to be a comedy, but somehow the events that occur in this famous and disreputable quarter now seem more funny than tragic. Tony Martin, in the Boyer rôle, surrounded by Yvonne DeCarlo, Peter Lorre and quite a collection of light opera characters, makes Pepe just another deep-breathing, thwarted lover of the Vagabond-King or Student-Prince school. Katherine Dunham and her dancers, who know a thing or two about The Dance, were persuaded to add another sexy note to the phoney Casbah atmosphere. The result will not be mistaken for art. You'd better listen to the good Arlen music on the radio.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

The Labor Movement

Wall Street Strike

SINCE March 29 over 1,000 men and women have been on strike at the Stock and Curb Exchanges in New York City. (Unless, please God, it has been settled before this reaches print, preferably with a victory for the strikers.)

The union involved is Local 205, United Financial Employes, which since 1946 has been affiliated with the Office Employes International Union, AFL. If the OEIU has a weakness, it would certainly be in the direction of conservatism rather than communism. Also in the picture is the Seafarers' International Union, AFL, which has its New York headquarters just around the corner from the UFE office.

Between the leaders of both unions there exists a warm friendship. Dave Keefe, the black-haired young Irish Catholic who heads the striking union, told this writer that he regards Paul Hall as "one of the best." Hall is secretary-treasurer of the SIU and its top man on the East Coast. (Harry Lundeberg is top man on the West Coast, where he runs the Sailors' Union of the Pacific, an SIU affiliate.) Both Hall and Lundeberg are among the most violent anti-communists in the American labor movement. Being husky seamen both of them, they are not afraid of the word "violent" in that description.

They are also militant trade unionists. Hall is one of the most able men in the AFL, but probably he has not spent much of his time figuring out the psychology of white collar workers or the importance of public opinion in organizing white collar workers. At any rate, when the strike started, Hall and his Seafarers gave full and generous support, and completely free of charge. One of the things you have plenty of in a seamen's union headquarters is seamen, and they might as well be out on a picket line, helping a weak little union to win a legitimate beef, as lying around the beach waiting to ship out.

Another thing: AFL seamen wear white caps. Why they wear white caps is another story, but they do. And when three men wearing white caps appear on a picket line of, say, ten men, it looks as though most of the people on the line are wearing white caps. Still another thing: when seamen of any description—AFL, CIO, Communist or anti-Communist—go on a picket line, they just naturally figure that they are expected to close the joint. So on the second day of the strike there was a nice little riot, and the cops got out of hand and the photographers took a lot of pictures that got into all the papers.

The result was that a lot of people figured that this was a communist strike. Why they figured it is another story, like AFL seamen wearing white caps. It would take a lot of explaining to make sense out of it.

Another result was that a lot of people figured that since it was a communist strike there was no obligation on their part to consider why these Exchange workers walked out, or whether or not they had justice on their side.

People should know that the starting wage at the Stock Exchange is $25 a week for charwomen, many of whom support families. They should know that 80 percent of the workers are men, most of them married, and that the average wage is not much better than $40. One elevator operator has worked there 22 years, is married and has two children. He makes $43 a week, and he did not receive his first increase until six years ago, when the union first appeared on the scene.

At the Curb Exchange there is a night watchman who has four children (one an invalid) and he is making all of $37 a week. As of last July the United States Department of Labor figured a minimum living wage for a manual worker with two children in New York to be $64.40. The Heller Committee estimates a white collar family's living wage to be about $96 a week. At the Stock Exchange the top wage for skilled reporters is $65.50.

Since a year ago the cost of living has risen about 12 percent. To the union's wage demands the Curb Exchange has countered with a 10 percent bonus for only one year, the Stock Exchange has offered $3 for those under $49, $4 for those up to $75 and $5 for those over $75. This averages out to about 7 percent or less.

It isn't necessary to go into the union's demand for "a limited union shop," namely, that those presently belonging and all new employees should be members of the union. The Taft-Hartley Labor Board held votes on the union shop question and the union only won by 691 to 67 and 178 to 12 at Stock and Curb Exchanges, respectively.

Never mind that. Just concentrate on the night watchman with the four children (one an invalid) making $37 a week. And then reflect on the remark of Francis Adams Truslow, president of the Curb: "An employee's private life is no affair of mine. If these people don't like it here, they can go somewhere else."

The Curb strike was settled on April 15.

It might help if your sympathies are where they should be, to write a letter to Emil Schram, president of the Stock Exchange. And if you feel strongly enough, you could send a donation to the United Financial Employes, 40 Exchange Place, New York 5, N. Y.

There is something significant about this strike. It is probably the first important stoppage in the white collar field that has been run by a non-communist union. It is also a kind of public cardiograph on the present moral health of the business heart of America. So far the readings are pretty discouraging.

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It is good to be able to say that a number of Catholics have been outspoken in their support of the strikers. These include the Jesuit magazine *America* and its editor, Father John LaFarge; also the New York chapter of the ACTU (Association of Catholic Trade Unionists) and its chaplains, led by the doughty Father John P. Monaghan. But more help seems to be needed.

JOHN C. CORT.

Notes on Tourism

ERNESTINE EVANS

MEN MAY CRY War, War, but the Travel has already begun. The smart air luggage and the knapsacks are packed (no Saratoga trunks any more and porters are scarce everywhere). The guide books mount on the bookstore shelves, and the press releases show sedentary editors under a dead weight of enticement to every foreign shore and ten thousand states, countries, cities, resorts, or just plain "aways-from-it-all." The hungry drums of Big Business in planes, ships, trains and buses, and the flutes of propaganda from dollarless governments round the world play constantly. The army, the navy, the air corps and the marines, have all been traveling for years and years, and many are glad enough to stick on the front porch or to domestic travel, but some of them still have the itch. Their sisters and their cousins and their aunts, like the Hokinson ladies in the cartoon, have been "cooped up" on one continent for a long time. There are vastly more ruins than ever before to lure Americans abroad (you'd think we'd lose the taste for them). We are well into a mass production age, and if The Grand Tour was something a few others used to have, then all of us feel a divine right to that benefit now.

Every Change of Scene is a Delight.—Seneca.
A Wise Traveller never despises his own country.
—Carlo Goldoni.

Most Americans will do their traveling in the USA, with detours into Mexico and Canada. The old and new family cars hold four, five or six, though travel by two and two is less argumentative and the station wagon set can pack in whole picnics and bevies of classmates.

I travel not to go anywhere but to go. I travel for travel's sake. The great affair is to move.

That was Robert Louis Stevenson, traveling with a donkey, and his rate of movement did not prevent side-long glances at flora and fauna, and quiet contretemps with other voyagers and some thinking of his own thoughts. Donkeys are a dying race of beast. Engines, millions of them, take us farther and faster. Yet no man has a jot more hours or minutes per day than ever he had, though the number of places the drivers of cars can check off have been manifolded. I wish it were true that on the highways that crisscross the country, more travelers paused to note the sunsets and sunrises on the plains, in the mountains, or, driving off the paved four and six breasted speedways, onto little dirt roads, farm cactus, with which to scrub the dishes, and tiedup

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to market roads, and watched with student-citizen interest what the simple hard working life of American farms is, noting the crops, the men and women, the little school houses, getting the flavor of the old agricultural country that is still the source of so much of our strength. That that strength is being sapped, that the erosion to be observed may shorten our national dream, ought to be noticed. A boastful people should know whereof it boasts, and hesitate in its pride.

Many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall be increased.—Daniel XII-4.

This year there has been an enormous increase in all sorts of American guide books, innumerable publicity pamphlets put out by local hotels, and chambers of commerce. The six million dollars spent for WPA guides have begun to pay off, not only in numbers of other handsomely illustrated regional guides, but in little 25 cent paper bound books like the Penguin guide to California. As a nation we had been somewhat lacking in the vast topographical literature that has made travel in England so rich in returns, and has been so important a fact in English culture. It is not merely that they have had so much more history, so many more centuries of monument and document, so deep-rooted an agricultural and landed population, so separate an island springboard. There has been a constant pouring forth of tribute to home counties, a belief that the moving finger writes and having writ, places retain their ghosts and are enriched by inherited traditions. Each English county has become a place of pilgrimage. We have a little of this, but never enough to make things unseen as evident as things seen. How rich Concord is, a locality which still celebrates Thoreau and Emerson and the Alcotts. An indignant caretaker, but serious, some years ago, when our party talked too much of Emerson, exclaimed: "Is Emerson taught in the public schools of Tokyo. Well, Thoreau *is!*"

Visitors to New York this summer might well step into a new British Book shop on East 55th street, the century old Batsford's of London ("Booksellers to Her Majesty Queen Mary," it reads over the door) and see what I mean by the importance of topographical publishing in making a people value its monuments and know its own artists. Had we a stable market that would pay for de luxe editions of 30,000 about this countryside, that measure of new town planning, the buildings of particular architects, our U.S. tourism would become a sounder, more enjoyable civilizing part of our restless life. True, the River series, the new guide books, the new picture books and calendars, the publishing flow from Williamsburg, the highway series, all these are variants on the things I covet. In due time local historical societies, and not summer theaters only, but more music festivals and pageants will bring paying guests and the lovers of native history together in dramatic round tables. Our tourists deserve better post cards than they get. Greeting cards are all very well (not at all very well to my personal taste) but comes a depression, I should certainly hope the relief agencies will take post card inventory of all our many blessings and all our past, drag in scholars and dreamers, and firstrate journalists to write captions, and show us that in every direction lie jointly-owned riches, and new frontiers of opportunity. We would need less Federal Housing if more people knew the ABC of land values and had the pioneer hang of cooperative building. Everything in our history needs to be recorded accessibly on penny or five cent post cards (or in the comics), for the millions who go some place and back again over the Newish World.

Amused and bemused by one of Alan Moorhead's articles in the London *Observer,* I quote to suggest that though we see ourselves with more flavor and detail than this foreign visitor does, what he says is all too like the poor money's worth lots of us get from a dash across the continent.

> From the moment of leaving New York, some 1,400 miles away, until I came in sight of the Mississippi at New Orleans, I seem to have been riding on a continuous switch back, a monstrous never-ending scenic railway. For the most part the scenery has consisted of the view of the back of the car in front, and the natural noises of the countryside are the sounds of the motorists behind, blowing their horns with cold and desperate fury. As far as I know this procession continues all day and all night, and it has thrown up a new industry which has no counterpart in Europe.
>
> This is the industry of the gasoline pump and the used car market. This is the civilization of the motorists' snack bar, of the juke box, of coffee and coca cola, a world of 10,000 "hotels" and tourist camps, of 20,000 neon-lit garages, of 50,000 awful hoardings advertising still more motor cars.

And how the touring British journalist does hate "chicken in the rough." He saw a lot of beautiful country and had a great many political interviews, but he almost silences the native defender as he rounds off with: "If you point to the millionaires' homes and the workman's automobile and tell me that the South is rich, I will remind you of these appalling farmer's shacks. If you say the South is Democratic and anti-Republican, I can refer you to a number of Southern gentlemen whose hatred for Truman burns with a hard gem-like flame. In the prohibitionist states the drinking is the most formidable. Bristling at Russia, most people are craving for peace. One can only retire defeated, at last, to the most obvious and useless cliché of all: this is a melting pot. And for the moment, the heat is still supplied by the dollar." So that's the way we look to "ithers" and allowing for a bit of irate exaggeration, it does look that way in spite of great stretches where one used to fear there were hardly any inhabitants and none at all in the gas business. The thought might well have occurred to Moorhead and doubled his distaste, that this is what millions of Europeans yearn for and what the Russians never tire of promising their people, though they are unconscious of it.

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Tourism 1948, everywhere, election year especially, for all travelers, ought to be inventory of our materialism, examination of our "American Way of Life." Who says we have not many "displaced people" super-Okies still? Twenty-seven million, the Census Bureau says, have shifted their places, since 1940, settling and resettling and still not very comfortable.

Traveling is one way of lengthening life, at least in appearance.

Benjamin Franklin says with his tongue in his cheek. He was not speaking of more deaths by motor cars than from accidents in the air. I get back to the theme that the spending of time is as important as the spending of money, and timewasters at home are as likely to be timewasters abroad and on the move. Good travel like good anything is served by thought. It may bring numerous new sights, but not necessarily new insights.

The soul of a journey is liberty, perfect liberty, to think, feel, do just as one pleases. We go a journey chiefly to be free of all impediments and of all inconveniences; to leave ourselves behind, much more to get rid of others.—William Hazlitt.

The man who goes alone can start today, but he who travels with another must wait till the other is ready.—W. D. Thoreau.

The one wrote in 1822 and the other in 1854, still in the Iron Age, but we are in the Paper Age, on the eve of the Atomic, and, with either money or ascetic habits, the man in search of solitary liberty can still have a wonderful time in the virgin forests of the U.S.A. at least. Going over waters and across international boundaries is an entirely different matter. As easy to set forth nude as without covering credentials. The State Department grants passports now, even to the Soviet Union, but not to Jugoslavia. And one has to show pressing business reasons and a record of no dangerous thinking to get into Japan, Korea or China. Only the cleverest planners and wanglers will actually pay visits to Germany. Passports are issued only if the wandering citizen can show that he has return passage, and hotel accommodations engaged abroad. Uncle Sam is determined on security, for himself or his citizens, it's not clear which, but he wants no nuisances and stranded ones troubling his Foreign Service. The matter of accommodations however has a hole in it. One may visit relatives abroad, which gives a handsome advantage to naturalized citizens and GI brides. The tourist agencies delight in the ruling. Like trade union officials over the Wagner Act. Well, join a group and be shepherded. It's the best way in the end for first trips; and old timers can always lose themselves and make private treaties with the agents, once aboard the plane or lugger. It is still possible to go a round of visits, casual, and starting for Rome spend the summer swimming off Brittany.

The Heaviest Baggage for a traveler is an Empty Purse.—German proverb.

In Rome do as the Romans make you do.

You would think it would not be necessary to warn Americans not to try to smuggle foreign currency bought at black market rates in New York into foreign countries. Americans are so used to the "benefits" of inflated currency between wars—who hasn't been a locust somewhere on the continent and gotten his double dollar's worth?—that they are entirely unprepared for the severe punishment the British in particular visit on those who stuff pound notes bought in New York at $2.62 in their socks, with an eye to getting some good antique furniture. Sir Stafford Cripps means business though pegging pounds annoys. Mr. K. of Boston was fined $400 at Southampton on April 3. He had better have stuck to a legal 5 pounds and paid $4 per for sterling after he landed. A word to the wise, and the honest, etc. "Wars," as an Admiral's wife remarked to me the other day, "don't really cost very much as they go along." Ah, but you must be far away from battle scenes, have an immense navy, and even so, see . . . there is always the nightmare that someone will invent a kind of button to take the place of dollars and then Americans too will have to give up travel. Dollar-happy spenders, beware.

No one who has been reading the British or French Press or been showered with press releases from travel bureaus can doubt that Americans are wanted, but their money, their dollars are wanted more. Modern Tourism is a business that is supposed to right trade balances, chirp up depressed areas, bring the propagandees within ear shot of national cultures. There was the Dane who murmured to me that he hoped too many Americans would not come this summer as clean sheets were a problem in hotels and the Danes didn't want to lose their tidy reputation. There are those who hint, while National Travel Associations play loud inviting tunes, that we need not expect to be liked by everybody in the lands we visit, dollars or no dollars, as locals will feel like "natives" not empire builders, when Americans get extra petrol, extra victuals, the right to buy in dollars and ship goods home. *"Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité"* are hard to devise between national treasuries in 1948. The fact is that the mass of our people aren't going to get a foot on any gang plank or plane. The ships have all been booked for months. Plane accidents alone will allow latecomers a likelihood to get plane reservations. Army and Business will still get priorities. But we need Europe quite as much as she needs us, and each nation has set up for its own people and their visitors a wealth of sports, art and international action and educational meetings. Latin America and the Caribbean area, and even Africa begin to see that tourists like parties, events, hubbub. It is interesting to see what each nation advertises. England stresses her 5000 miles of coast, the British Industries Fair, Music Festivals and theater and film events in Bath, Edinburgh, and pre-Olympic events. France has devalued the franc and announces cut rates on the Riviera. Belgium has its usual fêtes, and Holland has 27 scheduled fiestas. Sweden has a new steamship, the *Stockholm*. Finland has its white nights and its steam baths; Italy

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its age-long lure and its reviving handicrafts. Spain is trying to make a come-back but it advertises few comforts and the old feeling of distaste for the crimes of the Franco revolution will deter most travelers.

Travelers . . . seem to have no other purpose by taking long journeys but to procure themselves the pleasure of railing at what they have seen or heard.—Joseph Babetti.

Bei Uns es war besser.—Almost any German.

Travel makes a wise man better, but a fool worse. —Thomas Fuller.

The tax-payers, Congressman Taber notwithstanding, are out a lot of money trying to make Europeans like and admire and understand the U.S.A., but we are a gabby people, half of us are at any rate, and there could be a lot of good done by American tourists if they would remember to listen more and talk less (they will hear a lot of nonsense, to be sure). We are the world's great generalizers about everybody's business, but it hasn't been proved yet that we are as rich, as strong, so always in the right as some radio commentators contend. A little understatement, a bit of modesty, a little genteel listening and looking at the universal human predicament would become those who can afford to travel this summer. *Travel teaches tolerance.*—Disraeli. Or rather, it ought to. In any case, even without diplomatic passport, every tourist should put on himself the mission of mannerly ambassador. Europeans, too, can take a generalization out of one American mucker.

Travel only with thy equals or thy betters; if there are none, travel alone.—The Dhammapada.

This was written a long time ago, and few are rich enough to ride their own elephants, or travel with six post horses. In this gregarious democratic age, the snob's life is both easier and harder than ever before. There used to be always the hope that an English Lord would propose some fishing or a Rich Quaker would entertain an Anglophile and give him matter for talk for years to come. (Cf. hundreds of American memoirs.) All travelers should learn to pursue their hobbies alone. No museum was ever really enjoyed by anyone whose partner prefers the dog races, or wants to find a copy of the N. Y. *Times* or the Elkhart *Daily Truth*. Only the most Fuehrer types of Travel Agents can ever whip a pack of tourists into total interest in the schedule. Take breaks with humor, be prompt for roundups. Try a mixture of anarchy and socialism, on any holiday.

When I was at home, I was in a better place. —Shakespeare.

Believe it or not, there is no part of a journey better than the return home. The journey may have been wonderful, too short, chance-met people lost forever, but returning gives a chance for fresh zest in both settling down and planning another setting forth. And one fact looms clear, one can travel farther and faster with books than by ship or plane. Here are some books I have read:

Books and Travel

Travel in America, an Anthology. George Bradshaw. Farrar. $4.00.

AT THE end of an article about American propaganda (very topical topic) in the Yorktown *Herald*, a little country weekly, Ed Stanley writes: "The big trouble is that in our own country and in our own minds we are not decided as to what picture of America we want to present," and there it is. We do not know ourselves who we are or even what we want to be, and that "we" is compounded of millions of persons and widely differing places, and visions, and pasts. The reason George Bradshaw's anthology is so good a contemporary sweep over the continent is that our variety and dissidence are set forth in many keys and colors, yet his choices are those of a single discerning reader. Every selection from Anthony Trollope's account of Niagara through Sinclair Lewis' train ride (culled from Babbitt) to Aldous Huxley's horrid report (from After Many a Summer Dies the Swan) of burial in Los Angeles, and Henry Thoreau's revelation of Cape Cod and E. B. White's pilgrimage to Walden is superb on its witness. Kind. A connoisseur of good writing, an eclectic in taste for uncensored truth, he has assembled a documentary of people and places in motion, being viewed, exposed, enjoyed. His juxtapositions are such that each excerpt is heightened in flavor by its place on the American plan menu. Ring Lardner's story of the gabby pick-up girl merges into a poetic introduction to the Pacific shore, Robert Louis Stevenson's description of Monterey. You can bum it with Edward Newhouse in North Dakota; or see the New York skyline with Scott Fitzgerald, 1927: "As the ship glided up the river, the city burst thunderously upon us in the early dusk—the white glacier of lower New York swooping down like a strand of a bridge to rise into uptown New York, a miracle of foamy light suspended by the stars. A band started to play on deck, but the majesty of the city made the march trivial and tinkling. From that moment I knew that New York, however often I might leave it, was home." The twenty-eight selections, three from Trollope, a detailed describer, ought to be required State Department reading and volunteer choice for the rest of us.

The National Road. Philip D. Jordan. Bobbs. $4.00.

THIS is the fifth in the American Trails series under the general editorship of Jay Monaghan. Told in simple narrative style, Philip Jordan recreates the history of U.S. Highway 40, once a wilderness trail, then road of great migrations, of travelers in Conestoga wagons, the big freight horses pulling, the bells tinkling, and all sorts of conditions of men and women faring forth, Quakers, nurserymen, peddlers, politicians, adventurers, and the rest of the pioneers off for free land and a new life and property. Each of the five trail books more than doubles the pleasure and worth of traveling over American highways. Britain, Russia, these countries, as one noticed during the war, sustained themselves on the fat

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of their own pasts, used their broadcasting to remind their people of heroic building and fighting, yet what country has a more nourishing tradition of using every hand and coping with every surprise and defeat and coming through. Reliving the old life on Highway 40, pausing at the spots where George Washington stood and took it, and even the parts quoted from Daniel Drake, who studied the diseases of the interior valley of North America in the eighteen fifties, looked into alcoholism and cooking, have something for table talk and thought today. There is an excellent index and bibliography about the Cumberland Road, and to read the book is to get "good holt" on America's continuing restless history.

The Central Northeast. Editors of "Look." Houghton. $5.00.
The Far West. Editors of "Look." Houghton. $5.00.

THESE are seventh and eighth in a series that is by way of being a public service, contrived by a mass production magazine and a publishing firm, in concert, reminiscent of the way the firm of Ullstein in Berlin used to produce reasonable graphic books, by joint charges against newspaper and periodical press. Like the volumes on New England, The Southwest, The Central Northwest, The Midwest and The South, these are compact volumes of notable both color and black-and-white photography and intelligent text. An immense amount of information about each region is set down. If anything is lacking where so much is given, one might ask for the inclusion of well chosen bibliographies of books about each state, both fiction and not fiction, color and controversy, poetry and history, to cover the skeleton of guide book fact. "You have to know *both* coasts at least," said one reader, "to get the slightest idea of what the U.S.A. really is for natural bounty and florid ongoings."

Log Cabins. William Swanson. Macmillan. $2.95.

INDUSTRIAL society is forever emphasizing obsolescence. New books, new looks tend to take the total place of last year's and last century's durable goods. But there is no real reason why the old ways of craftsmanship and the new ways of building should be so constantly at war. There is a place for each. Take the business of shelter made of logs. There is reason to recommend this book by Mr. Swanson, a man of broad experience in the timber belt, familiar with log cabins, Game and Fish clubs, wood building and its tradition in the U.S.A., Scandinavia and Russia, too. Travelers through the national parks and northern and southern woods, with this manual in hand, and so many examples to behold, might, with zest, get going on next summer's "house of our own."

Desert Parade. William H. Carr. Viking. $2.50.

UNFORTUNATES who have never visited our southwestern desert country generally think of this area as arid, sandy, lifeless waste. It is arid, it is sandy (or rocky), but it is far from lifeless, as this attractive little handbook makes clear: an enormous variety of fascinating animals, birds, reptiles, plants manages to subsist there through a mysterious capacity for compensating for the external lack of moisture by internal metabolism. William H. Carr, former Associate Curator of the American Museum of Natural History in New York and now resident in Tucson, has provided the ideal companion for the visitor to this region. To avoid bulk and cost, he presents only the high-spots—the flora and fauna a visitor is most likely to come in contact with; his descriptions are always terse but vividly informative; the many photographs are sharp, clear, revelatory, beautifully reproduced.

So You're Going to England. Clara E. Laughlin. Houghton. $5.00.

THIS is such an efficient as well as entertaining book, completely revised to take in the new developments in post-war tourism, that it can be recommended to sophisticated and first-trippers as well. It even is a sort of ersatz trip for stay-at-homes, and an admirable bit of home-reading for lazy students of English history. It is explicit about all the official and semi-official abetters of tourism, who will help visitors find their opposite numbers in professional and cultural interests, and suggests all sorts of tie-ins with the British people. It tells how to join Rambler societies, for example, with an eye to economy and seeing the British as they see themselves. Its Twenty Rules for Travelers, beginning with "Do unto the other fellow in his country as you would like to have him do unto you in yours" might well be sent in engraved copies to all delegates to UN assemblies. I sometimes think manners ever more than morals make the world go round, not that manners are not founded on morals. Rule No. 9, "Proper preparation trebles the value of travel, and certainly doesn't spoil any of the pleasure," reminds me of a friend's idea that all travelers ought to subscribe to one or more newspapers or magazines of the country they intend to visit six months ahead of time, and certainly visitors to England can prolong the pleasure of their visit by spending their last pounds or shillings having an English periodical sent after them for weekly reminder 1948-49, say the *Listener,* published by the BBC, the *Manchester Guardian,* the *Educational Supplement* to the London *Times,* or *Punch* or the *Countryman,* the *Economist* or . . . but shop on any English news stand.

So You're Going to Scandinavia. Clara E. Laughlin. Houghton. $4.00.

IT IS a niece and her partner, I believe, who have done this good job on revising Clara E. Laughlin's Scandinavia in the "So You're Going" series. Everything has been checked with the able government tourist bureaus, of Sweden, Norway and Denmark, and the history of the war years tucked in. Miss Laughlin's twelve little Baedeker size volumes (plus three books especially setting forth ways and means for youth to travel) are all readable, covering history, but not too much, hotels for rich and poor, restaurants wisely chosen; and above all she had the general notion that Americans ought to fetch home cultural goods and ideas as well as $100 tax-free concretes.

Folk Song, USA. *John and Alan Lomax. Duell.* $6.00.

SURELY this collection of songs by and about the American people and their hearts and hands, and the hardships and joys of the settling of a continent—the life work of the Lomaxes as collectors, presented in arrangements by Charles and Ruth Seagar—is true Voice of America. It is a book to be taken along to camp and shack, fine to lug abroad and deposit with friends or

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strangers. The 111 songs, and the accompanying text relating the story of the circumstances in which they were first sung, and the succeeding variants make homely American history. Furthermore, so many of them are derivative from ballads brought by early Scotch, Irish and English settlers and by later immigrants, that there is bond, peoples to peoples, in all these songs of loneliness, love, and hard work. And there is a lot of ribald laughter too. Lots of good dancing songs; and some honeys for the ship's concert. There is this about folk songs, the art is in the songs themselves, and all with lungs can somehow sing 'em. I must repeat that this is a particularly happy book to take on a journey abroad and leave with old friends or chance-met. For it embodies much that goes to make up the real America.

Journey In Time. Blair Niles. Coward. $4.00.

ANOTHER anthology, which has been compiled by a scholar and an artist so that the book has unity and climax and offers just the right passages to whet the appetite for a whole year's read for travelers and foot-bound alike. It is about the Western Hemisphere, less to bite off than One World. Mrs. Niles begins with "a best-seller of four centuries ago," Bernard Diaz del Castilla, and goes on to a selection from R. B. Cunningham Graham's, "The Horses of the Conquest." She calls the bit from Thomas Gage's survey of the West Indies, "propaganda four centuries ago." A great many of the authors she quotes have long been out of print. She unearths buried treasure. She chooses from books in print now, the writers with discerning minds and the gift of tongues. I had forgotten Kipling's description of Rio Harbor, and that Madam Calderon de la Barca reviewing Prescott was the queen of all book reviewers and that Richard Steele talked with Alexander Selkirk in 1713.

France, Paris and the Provinces. Roger Roumagnac. Whittlesey. $4.50.

OLD BAEDEKER may be turning in his grave at the giddiness of the new guide books, and this one especially. It is decked with photographs and maps and cartoons in black and white and lots of decorative color, and yet is as packed as a caramel box with current facts, past history, and miniature come-on travel posters, and it has special sections on gastronomy, by Pierre Andrieu. With all the world hungry, the French with their rich countryside, and their traditional art of making anything and everything savory and succulent, a national art, mean to lose none of their past reputation. Would that American state departments of development and recreation had also the happy idea of promoting the fruits and vegetables, the regional soups (if any) the famous bakers and hunters and fishers via diners and palatial hotels, in their areas. Since so much of the advertised "French cooking" one gets over here is far from French, why not seek out Kentucky and Missouri hams and write about how they differ from Virginia smoked pig. The French would long ago have done it. But this is a book about France, and province by province, the sauces and fishes and patisseries and wines are celebrated. The book not only whets the appetite, but is an elegant souvenir and gift book. Reminds one to lay in some French cook books on one's travels, to talk about and brood over on return. Besides memories, one should always purloin a bit of every nation's craft and return with some national trade secrets and recipes.

All the Best in England. Sidney Clark. Dodd. $3.50.

A PROFESSIONAL traveler tries and succeeds in putting himself in the boots of the people he wants to help get their money's worth of a trip to England. It is as good as a soldier's orientation course, full of detail—what you see from the 13 bus, names and addresses of big and little restaurants, and how to get to all the sights and shrines you have read about, and chapter after chapter on his own adventures with people and places, ration cards, and museums, dog cemeteries and which bridge to rent a punt at. I didn't know the old *Europa* was now the French SS *Liberté,* nor what a good Tourist game could be made of an alphabet of historic names. The book is notable for the way he ties in English sources of American institutions. Especially good on Wales.

Two Novels

The Ides of March. Thornton Wilder. Harper. $2.75.

THE REPUTATION of Thornton Wilder, one can say with unusual confidence, is justified: "an assured place in American Letters," the publisher's dustjacket says, and it is quite obvious. But what that reputation and place will be, appear vague and uncertain. Very naturally interesting for his contemporaries is one part, and his new novel about Caesar, "The Ides of March," reinforces that much.

All Thornton Wilder's writings are interesting and engaging principally for two opposite reasons at once, and the new one like the earlier. "The Ides of March" also is a *tour de force,* a tricky and unusual book conception, picturesque, and in style in being new style. The novel is constructed in four Books, which overlap in time; and the Books are built of various imaginary letters and documents, which also overlap in episode. Great immediacy is achieved, and that flattering shock of discovering oneself contemporary with high ancient times and also intimate in a famous ruling circle. The reader's ingenuity and puzzling proclivities are gently exercised in fitting the pieces of the picture together. It is not just a plain novel to read, but an entertainment presented in book form. Thornton Wilder is popular for one reason, by his talent and fertility along these Broadway-Hollywood, commercial lines. He repeatedly gives the big public a novel product (new forms not in the history of literature, perhaps, but in the book clubs and show business). These products, as such, are very objective commodities, in a way impersonal to an extreme, like gin rummy or a new system of bidding.

All that is on the one hand: one of the opposite reasons. At the same time, interest in all Thornton Wilder's writings is interest in him, the author. His highly objective forms of entertainment are, at once, personal essays of almost autobiographical subjectivity. They develop a more complex and ruminative interest which seems little attached to the calculated and mechanical *tour de force.*

The prose is studiedly literary. The suave and vaguely archaic style smells rather of the lamp than of the neon sign. There is an air of scholarliness and a conscious academic standoffishness. This furnishes directly a piquancy, and it leads a reader to look for added values and ideas and philosophic speculations. And in these new Last Days

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of Julius Caesar the author again ranges wide over large subjects, more extensively than ever before.

Caesar is the protagonist, and, in spite of every hedge and relative approach and contradiction — in spite of Catullus's enmity and the author's dedication at the front of the book—Caesar is the historical novel's great and central hero. Was his assassination a kind of suicide? The threat was known and his precautions slight. Caesar is presented as a man extraordinarily free, and he is filled with human power and possesses all the external powers Rome could supply. The author speaks in the Preface of "Caesar's inquiry concerning the nature of love . . . religion . . . himself as possibly filling a rôle as an instrument of 'destiny'." In all these directions the witnesses through whom Mr. Wilder's subjective imagination creates and probes the hero (aided by historical knowledge, Shakespeare, and a long tradition) show that Caesar was baffled. Caesar, the Leonardo statesman, Catullus, the Poet, Lucius Mamilius, the secular contemplative, Clodia Pulcher, the Girl of Catullus's poems, Cato, and the servants, the police, Old Romans, Cleopatra, all judge, or don't judge but show, that Caesar had reached an end. In himself he was intelligent, disciplined, charming, sympathetic, prudent, but unable to say he was happy. For his society he had solved the material political problem, but he was unable to create in Romans a spirit to make politics significant. He loved Cleopatra, and his love was not returned (as he loved). The gods his people had known, he knew did not exist, and he could not find the unknown God. "When he saw that he was surrounded on all sides by drawn daggers, he wrapped his head in his robe at the same time drawing its folds about his feet with his left hand so that when he fell the lower part of his body would be decorously covered. . . ." Thornton Wilder asks, it appears, a good many of the questions. He does it very much in the context of today's external American culture. He does it subjectively, indirectly, smoothly, relativistically, liberally. So, of course, he doesn't do it sharply nor very penetratingly. It remains to be seen how memorably. PHILIP BURNHAM.

Bodies and Souls. Maxence van der Meersch. Pellegrini & Cudahy. $3.75.

"BODIES AND SOULS" is one of the most important and least superficially adroit novels to have come out of France recently. There is, undoubtedly, something over-eager and over-grown about this big book and its plunge across the field of French medicine. But anyone willing to meet a serious work seriously will recognize that "Bodies and Souls" fulfils, in the very prodigality of its characters, incidents, observations, the first and last condition of the novel form.

Maxence van der Meersch is the forty-one-year-old author of ten considerable novels. *L'Empreinte du Dieu,* translated as "Hath not the Potter," which won the Prix Goncourt in 1936, is a shorter and more shapely book than the present one. *Invasion* 14, (1935), simply "Invasion" in translation, conveyed the smothering and embitterment of life in occupied territory, the disheartening industrial towns near the Franco-Belgian border, from one of which van de Meersch comes. After his first novel, a story of smuggling, and his second, an essay in autobiography, van de Meersch turned in *Quand les sirènes se taisent* ("When the Looms Are Silent" in English) to a naturalistic subject and the technique in which he

RUSSIA AT PRAYER

That Russian spirituality has its own special character, its own depth and richness, hardly needs stating. But **A TREASURY OF RUSSIAN SPIRITUALITY** ($6.00) is the first real survey of it that has been made for the English-speaking world. Dr. Fedotov, who compiled and edited it, has chosen masterpieces of Russian Orthodox spiritual writings from the eleventh to the twentieth centuries. None of the pieces are scraps, but either a whole book or a long extract. We think the book tells you more about the essential Russian character than quite a long visit behind the old iron curtain would yield.

FOR CONSERVATIVES

Of the Knox translations of Holy Scripture we have told you before and shall tell you again, but there are still readers who demand the Douay, and will not have Msgr. Knox. For them, we suggest **THE NEW TESTAMENT** (Douay Version) edited with notes by Dr. Arendzen. The type is clear and good, the text is set in paragraphs with the verse numbers relegated to the margin ($2.00).

REPRINTS

If you ever want to give a present of a size that will slip into an ordinary envelope, but still be really handsome and worth having, get Chesterton's **THE QUEEN OF THE SEVEN SWORDS** ($1.00) in the baby's-pocket-size edition. It is bound in blue with gold stamping, and as it consists of Chesterton's poems on Our Lady, it is particularly appropriate for May.

Other reprints of books that died when we couldn't get anything to print them on and that are now back in stock are: **A JUDGMENT ON BIRTH CONTROL** by Dr. Raoul de Gutcheneere, ($1.50); **CATHOLICISM, CAPITALISM AND PROTESTANTISM** by Amintore Fanfani ($1.00); **ST. THOMAS AQUINAS** (originally called *The Angelic Doctor)* by Jacques Maritain ($2.50), and **ST. THOMAS MORE** by Daniel Sargent ($3.00).

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has continued. Van der Meersch is not a naturalist, because his characters escape in the long run from strict materialistic determination. But he immerses himself in a prescribed environment as thoroughly as Zola did—to the point of coming up with his hands full of mud from the bottom. Like Zola, he has an infinite, militant patience for detail. An astonishing knowledge of doctors and doctoring serves to mortise and tenon "Bodies and Souls," gives it a documentary dignity. The stench, the dreariness, the vital excitements of the hospitals are here because van der Meersch obviously spent a great deal of time there, observing, absorbing, recording. And this naturalistic, if not naturalist, novelist, who has made use of the naturalist procedure for at least the corporal half of his work, has an immediate advantage over most analytical novelists who pay no particular attention to external detail. "Without details," said a critic who did his work before naturalism, Sainte-Beuve, "nothing lives."

One weakness of "Bodies and Souls" is the translucency of its supposed principal character. Michel Doutreval, whom we meet just after his return from his year of military service and follow through his rejection of the Angers Medical Faculty and all its works, is as a young man ought to be. Perhaps he is as a young man gets to be after some very severe trial. Since there is no hint of any preliminary purification, Michel is, from the start, a little implausibly good and true. The consumptive girl, Evelyne, for whom Michel gives up the assured future of a specialist's son, somehow draws more reality from the domestic details of her struggle against poverty. Michel Doutreval is the comparatively insubstantial personage upon whom a highly important *crise de conscience* is imposed. He gathers up the light against which formidable shadows move.

Van der Meersch has collided hard, upon his way, with the philosophy of Nietzsche. Young Blaise Rameau of the autobiographical *Car ils ne savent ce qu'ils font* is fascinated by the Nietzsche for whom "man is something to be surmounted." In "Bodies and Souls," Jean Doutreval, Michel's father, meditates on the transvaluation of all values and sacrifices first his son, then the life of his daughter Mariette, then, almost, another daughter to his desire to get ahead and along with his colleagues. Meanwhile his experiments toward a cure for schizophrenia lead him far beyond the limits of consideration for human beings.

Doutreval is fanatical rather than talented, the man who drives a single idea to death. The genius of the Medical Faculty at Angers is the surgeon Géraudin. Not only does van der Meersch capture the swiftness and deftness of a great surgeon at work; the Géraudin who goes about pinching his ear to test his mounting blood pressure, who wastes his capacities on cosmetic surgery for fees to please a foolish wife, who will not pay attention to the pricklings at the back of his neck when he is tired—this Géraudin is a complete individual. The best writing in "Bodies and Souls" follows the decline of Géraudin, through his first infinite seconds of panic while operating, to the butchery in childbirth of Mariette Doutreval, to the final sordid abdication of all standards. Few pages in contemporay fiction are as moving or as resolutely modern as those which lead up to the suicide of Géraudin while the radio blares and keeps on blaring for three days until his body is discovered.

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The author has wrenched strong characters out of his naturalistic notebooks. He has, further, succeeded at that other task which, because of the all-importance of the milieu, is at least as difficult as characterization in the naturalistic novel: he has animated an environment. Van der Meersch has taken the whole sluggish tissue of life in a French provincial town and speeded up its metabolism, given it pace and tone. When he is done we have sensed Angers, and the northern town where Michel goes, through doctors' senses. And van der Meersch succeeds, again, by piling up his instances, data, facts. "Bodies and Souls" leads us to reflect, not only concerning the naturalistic novel but concerning any novel, that many faults can be forgiven provided only there is no meagerness.

This book will encounter opposition on other than artistic grounds. There will be a good deal of indignation, ostensibly about the number of abortions, actually about something much more metaphysical. In the Medical Faculty at Angers young doctors are judged and promoted according to their powers for self-ingratiation. Around each of the senior doctors, who spend the greater part of their time enriching themselves with their private nursing-homes, hang a group of young men who do the chief's lecturing and even his laboratory research, all his onerous tasks, and wait for him to die. The first young doctor to attain a chair, a chair of orthopedic surgery, has never held a scalpel in his hand. It is this system and the virulent selfishness sustaining it which sends Michel off to his slum practice in the north. Van der Meersch does not have an eye for spectacular evils alone. In François Mauriac's *La fin de la nuit* we learn of Thérèse Desqueyroux, Mauriac's criminal heroine made discerning by her affliction, that it is not only the offenses against the common law that count, nor the gross and obvious abuses, but, also, buried in the depths of a life, "the little hideous action, the tiny scorpion chosen among a thousand others." In "Bodies and Souls," when Jean Doutreval decides quietly to forget that his assistant Groix was the real discoverer of his cure for lunacy, we know that we have been put once more in the presence of the small poisonous act.

To those who protest that van der Meersch's censure is severe we can only mention his contrary examples: Michel and his ordeal; old Professor Norf, the selfless searcher for the cause of cancer, all of whose results turn out to be negative; and many other people and actions in this book. For van der Meersch has set himself to studying—as Mauriac has hardly done, and at this point van der Meersch's work becomes complementary to Mauriac's—the exceptional: the greatly gifted, as in the case of Géraudin; the exceptionally good.

There were abuses. That was in another country, and, besides, the war supervened. Nonetheless we can learn something about the state of consciences as well as about the state of criticism from the reception accorded this earnest and significant book.

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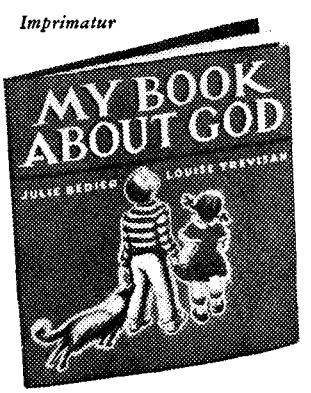

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against it—except that a great deal of the successful commercial art accomplished by the "outstanding" artists and offered here is evidently vulgar and produced by factory methods. Yet this is an extremely interesting book to have. It will not teach one to draw or to paint, but for anyone with talent it presents the innumerable contemporary fields in which talent may express itself, here in America, and be paid for doing so. Moreover, its insistence on the multiplicity of techniques now available may very likely stimulate experimentation. It is always interesting and useful to know about methods and tools, how the fashion artist draws a body before clothing it, the effect you get with the "scratchboard technique," the proper papers to use, the instruments. It is by seeing how things are done that the desire to do them is aroused. The volume opens with serious and clear chapters on perspective, composition and color.

CONTRIBUTORS

The cover design for this issue is the work of S.-Nowicka.

John HAY is a New England poet and critic, a volume of whose poems was brought out by Duell, Sloan & Pearce in the spring of 1947.

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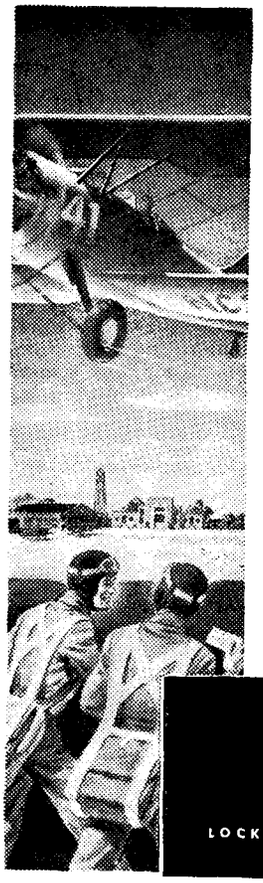

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